



CYNTHIA A. STERLING
COUNCILMEMBER

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CITY CLERK, FRESNO CA

August 7, 2008

Mary Curry
Concerned Citizens of West Fresno
312 West Valencia
Fresno, California 93706

Jeff Reid
McCormick, Barstow, Sheppard, Wayte Carruth LLP
5 River Park Place East
Post Office Box 28912
Fresno, California 93729

Dear Mrs. Curry and Mr. Reid:

Per our previous conversations with each of you and Nick Yovino, Director of Planning and Development, we are holding a special City Council workshop on August 19, 2008 at 11:00 am.

Later on this same day, the City Council will hear a further briefing in Closed Session. Due to the Closed Session, the City Council will not be able to engage in any deliberations during your permitted time.

You each will be allowed ten minutes to present an overview of your thoughts regarding Darling International's current operation at 795 West Belgravia Avenue in southwest Fresno.

Any written documentation you wish to submit into the record must be reviewed in our office no later than 12:00 pm (Noon) on Thursday, August 14, 2008. **No exceptions.**

Please provide three unbound originals. Copies shall be made for all Councilmembers and the Mayor at our cost and placed in the agenda packets delivered on Friday afternoon.

If you have any questions, please contact my Chief of Staff, Gregory Barfield, at (559) 621-7834 or by e-mail at Gregory.Barfield@fresno.gov.

I thank each of you for your understanding and work, in making this special workshop happen.

Sincerely,

CYNTHIA A. STERLING
Member of the Fresno City Council, District Three

cc: Council President Blong Xiong
Becky Klisch, City Clerk ✓
James Sanchez, City Attorney
Nick Yovino, Director Planning and Development



August 13, 2008

To: Council Member Cynthia Sterling

From: Randall C. Stuewe, CEO of Darling International 

Re: Item scheduled for closed-session discussion on Tues., Aug. 19.

Please allow Darling International to remain an employer in Fresno.

Summary:

Darling International has applied for permits to install equipment that would have expanded the processing capabilities and efficiency of a rendering and recycling plant in West Fresno, resulting in fewer hours of operation weekly. During the application process, the city notified Darling that it lacked a Conditional Use Permit required to operate. Now, rather than seek permission to install new equipment, the company is merely asking for permission to remain in operation. Note: If the company is required to apply for a new Conditional Use Permit, anticipated CEQA(CA Environmental Quality Act) litigation puts current operations at risk.

Please note:

- 1) The plant employs 49 people ~ 26 drivers, 16 plant workers and 7 office and management staff with a total payroll and benefit cost of \$3.24 million annually.
- 2) All jobs pay good wages. UFCW #8 represents plant workers, who earn \$14.75-\$15.00/hour plus health & pension. Teamsters #421 represents drivers, who earn \$15.90/hour plus health & pension.
- 3) The plant has, over the past four years, voluntarily installed innovative air-scrubbing technology at a cost of nearly \$10 million. The plant was modernized three years ago with state of the art processing, control and odor mitigation equipment. All improvements were permitted by the City of Fresno.
- 4) The plant exists solely to support the operations of Beef Packers, Inc., Foster Farms and Harris Ranch Beef, among the largest local employers. *A Darling shutdown could directly affect production capabilities at Harris Ranch, BPI and Foster Farms. Ultimately, if a rendering alternative could not be found immediately, some 4000 local jobs would be in jeopardy.* Closure of the plant would result in jobs lost and create a livestock disposal emergency.
- 5) Rebuilding the plant would cost an estimated \$40 million. The industry is labeled an "essential" service by the state of California.
- 6) The plant was located with federal dollars in an identified industrial zone with substantial city support.
- 7) The City of Fresno has only now, after 50 years of continuous operation, raised issues about a need for a Conditional Use Permit to authorize existing operations to continue.

Additional Facts

(Chronology) In March 1953, the County of Fresno issued Variance #377 to SPU #9 for use of the facility as a rendering plant. In 1956, Sierra Rendering plant opened. In May 1965, Peterson Manufacturing purchased the rendering facility. In 1971, the City of Fresno completed the annexation of the rendering facility. In January 1987, Darling-Delaware Company (now Darling International) acquired ownership of the site.

(Customers) Darling International customers include Harris Ranch Beef, Beef Packers, Inc. and Foster Farms. Information from the California Employment Development Department suggests that Beef Packers Inc. employs 1,000 to 4,999 employees in Fresno County, Harris Ranch Beef between 500 and 999 and Foster Farms between 1,000 and 4,999. Darling provides a critical service to these businesses.

(Risk of Closure) Plant closure in Fresno would create disposal issues for the Valley's meat industries. Burial of animal byproducts in landfills is restricted because of water contamination issues. Incineration capacity is lacking and difficult to get permitted. The state veterinarian stated publicly, "If the rendering industry is disrupted, dairy farmers will be forced to violate state law."

In August/September of 2006, there was a carcass disposal crisis in the Valley when a heat wave resulted in a significant increase in animal mortalities. This surge, in combination with disruptions in the rendering industry (one plant closed and another could not operate because of mechanical breakdowns) caused an emergency declaration. As a result, the State Veterinarian and California Department of Food & Ag formed an Emergency Carcass Disposal Working Group to (1) support the rendering industry in California and to find ways to facilitate expansion of such capacity to keep pace with the dairy, poultry and meats industries in California and (2) develop emergency response procedures to address disposal in the event that the rendering industry is overwhelmed again in the future. (Dr. Richard Breitmeyer – State Veterinarian formed and chaired the working group; Dr. Dennis Wilson and Dr. Michael Payne from CDFA co-chair the working group). Many state regulators consider rendering to be an important component of the state, regional and local essential services infrastructure.

(Products Created) The Fresno plant creates poultry feed ingredients as well as tallow used for soap, lipstick, Tupperware and paints.

(Global Warming Impact) Rendering byproducts (1) Diverts carbon and nitrogen rich materials away from the soil, surface waters, ground water and the atmosphere by recycling them; and (2) Recycles carbon and nitrogen into useful products, which not only reduces the need for new products but also reduces the production of greenhouse gases that result when such products are produced and then disposed of. Disposing of these by-products in landfills or by burning, burial, composting, dumping or abandonment, rather than recycling them will result in a significant net increase in the production of greenhouse gases, which contribute to global warming.

Concerned Citizens of West Fresno



(559) 233-9348 or (559) 355-6331

Mrs. Mary A. Curry
Concerned Citizens of West Fresno
312 W. Valencia Ave.
Fresno, CA 93706

August 15, 2008
Fresno City Council

Dear Fresno City Council:

The Darling Rendering Plant has been an unwelcome business in West Fresno, community for over 50 years. It was originally opened as a slaughterhouse, but currently functions as a stand alone rendering plant; responsible for production of hundreds of thousands of pounds of products: poultry feed, dog feed, paint, and tallow for cosmetics.

Historically, this plant has not held the proper permits to operate, and by the City's own research; there is ***no existing Conditional Use Permit*** for the current operations. This plant has noxious odors emanating from it regularly, with numerous reports of animal carcasses, and blood products dropping from its trucks, leaving a trail along residential streets. In this year alone, the San Joaquin Air Pollution Board received 300 written complaints from the West Fresno community documenting these occurrences.

We believe this plant has adversely affected the health and well being of West Fresno Citizens, and continues to be a detriment to our community. Darling is an international Company that must adhere to the law. The law is clear regarding the requirement for a CUP, and they have operated without one.

We are requesting that this council and city officials simply do what is right; search for a more suitable site and ***assist the Darling rendering plant in relocating***. This is what we want.

Mayor Autry rightly referred to Fresno as "the tale of two cities." West Fresno has been dumped on for years and it is time to stop.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Mary A. Curry
Concerned Citizens of West Fresno